

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK BETTER: The Hemisphere Sets a Higher Standard

Democratic values and practices are fundamental to advancing all of our hemispheric objectives. A strong democratic culture serves as the foundation for hemispheric security and economic prosperity. Maintaining and strengthening the rule of law and respect for the democratic system are a shared hemispheric goal and constitute the central political priority of the Summits of the Americas process. With this in mind, leaders at all Summits of the Americas have focused on strengthening democracy.

At the Quebec City Summit, leaders set forth a new standard for action. They agreed to defend democracy throughout the hemisphere, and to address specific aspects of democracy such as strengthening regional anti-corruption mechanisms; promoting greater transparency and accountability in electoral processes; building more effective, transparent, and accountable government institutions; ensuring free and independent media; and empowering local governments.

Achieving these goals requires leaders throughout the region to work together. Bilaterally and region-wide, the United States actively supports efforts to strengthen and promote democracy, enlarge the community of democratic nations worldwide, provide long-term assistance to newly emerging democracies, improve legal systems, and support active civil societies.



Jose Garcia votes in the presidential elections held March 21, 2004, in El Salvador. (Ginnette Riquelme, AP/WWP)

U.S. ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE HEMISPHERE'S AGENDA

- The U.S. joined Summit partners in creating the **Inter-American Democratic Charter**, designed to reinforce active defense of representative democracy through the Organization of American States.
- The U.S. financially contributes toward strengthening democratic systems and **elections observation** throughout the hemisphere, including contributions to the Organization of American States' electoral observation missions in the Dominican Republic, Panama, El Salvador, and Grenada.
- With 29 other countries, the U.S. ratified the **Inter-American Convention Against Corruption**, the first internationally binding agreement to focus specifically on corruption. A Follow-Up Mechanism mandated by leaders at Quebec is monitoring implementation of the Convention to ensure full compliance with the Convention to fight corruption; the U.S. is working with partners to strengthen that mechanism.